

## News from SALEM COUNTY

Office of Public Information

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PICTURE ATTACHED (From left to right: James Busser, Beth Timberman, Gabriel Hall, Scott Brewer)

## SALEM COUNTY RAILROAD MOVING FULL-STEAM AHEAD

(SALEM, NJ)--Deputy Freeholder Director Beth E. Timberman, Chair of the County Planning, Transportation, and Agriculture Committee, today announced that U.S. Rail Corporation of New Jersey (USRNJ) is the new operator for the Salem County rail line. USRNJ became the operator after the previous railroad company, JP Rail, signed their operating rights over to USRNJ.

"We look forward to working with USRNJ to continue modernizing our Salem County rail line for our local businesses," said Deputy Director Timberman. "The Freeholders worked out a plan with USRNJ, which maintains county ownership while they invest in continuing improvements to ensure that our rail line is able to meet the demands of the business community."

The Salem County shortline is an 18-mile stretch of track that runs from Swedesboro, Gloucester County to the Salem Port. The shortline has been owned by Salem County since the mid 1980s. The track is used to run raw materials to manufacturing plants such as Mannington Mills and the Anchor Glass Container Corporation. The track is also utilized by the Southern New Jersey Farmers Exchange so agricultural products can ship out via the Salem Port. In total, the County of Salem estimates that the rail line supports over 1,400 jobs.

"The centerpiece for the rail line is the Port of Salem," said USRNJ President Gabriel Hall. "This is the future driver of economic development and job creation in the area. Growth will come from developing commodities such as grain, forest products, and several exportable items. This will create jobs at the Port and on the railroad."

USRNJ is a wholly owned subsidiary of U.S. Rail of Ohio, and is a family owned, fourth generation, short line Railroad Company with its headquarters in Toledo, Ohio. The company operates rail lines in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and now New Jersey. U.S. Rail is also constructing a rail terminal on Long Island. U.S. Rail annually handles over 25,000 rail cars across its rail systems.



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"USRNJ shares our goal to improve rail service to current customers," said Deputy Director Timberman. "In turn, this will increase rail volume, creating additional jobs and maintaining current employment levels. In order to increase rail efficiency, USRNJ will eventually rehabilitate the entire rail line, and build a new yard track."

In August the major share holder of JP Rail, Joe Patticio passed away. The Board of Directors requested the Board of Chosen Freeholders to consider a change in operators to US Rail of Toledo, Ohio. Accordingly, Deputy Director Timberman, Freeholder Dale Cross, and County Administrator Earl Gage made a site visit to the company's headquarters in Ohio to inspect the company and begin negotiations. Those negotiations were completed and the Freeholders unanimously approved the transfer on October 7, 2009. Details of this new agreement call for a payment of back funds owed to the County, a new revenue sharing plan, and joint cooperation for improving the line.

"USRNJ has many plans which we believe will benefit the businesses of Salem County," said Deputy Director Timberman. "One piece of their plan is to establish a truck/rail care transload facility in the City of Salem. An improved rail system is an important component to economic recovery, sustainability, and growth, and we are excited about this partnership."

In September the Freeholders applied for \$21 million for railroad improvements through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant in conjunction with South Jersey Port Corp and Conrail. If Salem County were to receive this grant, it would allow for the rail line to be completely upgraded to Class II in just over two years. The upgrade to Class II would allow faster transport and passenger travel.

"Renovation of the rail line made possible through the TIGER grant would open up Salem County to the entire region for our local manufacturing businesses, ensuring hundreds of current jobs and having the possibility of thousands more," concluded Deputy Director Timberman.